

**Sarah Holmes, Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury**

Testimony before the Joint Committee on Children

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

**S.B. No. 208 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENTAL CONSENT.**

Good day, Senator Anwar, Representative Anwar, Senator Kelly, Representative Dauphinais, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Sarah Holmes and I am a Community Educator at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury. We are a domestic violence and sexual assault crisis agency serving 12 towns in the Greater Waterbury region. I am writing in support of S.B. No. 208 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENTAL CONSENT.

Social media use has both benefits and harmful consequences. Social media platforms can be useful in connecting people with a wider community of individuals who share interests and passions, and learning about the greater world. Simultaneously, use of these platforms has been correlated with mental health issues with children and teens, including: depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, irritability, and suicide risk.

Youth may be exposed to misinformation and inappropriate content. Youth may also fall into the harmful trap of believing that the perfectly curated social media persona is an accurate reflection of someone else's life. This is particularly harmful for teens as developmentally, they are seeking peer acceptance. Teens viewing these "perfect lives" on social media may not understand that it is an inaccurate representation of someone's life, and may develop low-self esteem. Social media enables cyberbullying among youth, the consequences of which we have unfortunately seen throughout the years with teens dying by suicide. In the field of sexual violence prevention, we are aware that child sexual abusers, as well as traffickers, utilize social media to identify vulnerable youth, begin the grooming process, and engage in digital abuse.

It is imperative to abuse prevention and child protection that greater parental monitoring be required by social media companies. Parental consent and monitoring helps parents and their children make decisions together about appropriate use of social media, and creates room for conversations within families about things kids may be exposed to online, whether they be beneficial or harmful.

I urge you to support SB No. 208. to make social media safer for children in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah Holmes, MSW

(203) 575-0388 ext. 131  
sholmes@safehavenofgw.org